

Washington, DC — On Wednesday, October 17, Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) introduced a piece of legislation called the Bipartisan Resolution for Iraq (H.R. 3863). The bill provides a strategic approach to the war in Iraq to enhance the national security interests of the United States both at home and abroad, while ensuring the safety of the United States Armed Forces and ensuring stability in Iraq and the Middle East. — “There needs to be a bipartisan way ahead in Iraq that will address not only Iraqi security, but America’s security, with a strategy that focuses on our national interests in this conflict,” said Congressman Sestak. “My concern is that while our troops have served our country courageously and brilliantly, that our engagement in Iraq has degraded America’s security so severely that we cannot confront other pressing security threats at home and abroad.”

Having served as a Three-Star Vice Admiral that led the George Washington aircraft carrier battle group into combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Congressman Sestak is convinced that an inconclusive, open-ended involvement in Iraq is not in the best interest of America’s security and believes that how America intends to end the war is especially critical.

“Ending the War in Iraq is necessary, said Congressman Sestak, “But how we end it is of even greater importance for both our security and our troops’ safety.”

Congressman Sestak believes there are catalysts for a bi-partisan discussion to end the War in Iraq:

- First, the Army will rapidly unravel if redeployment from Iraq does not begin before Spring 2008. Today, 40 percent of all U.S. Army equipment is in Iraq; there is no Army unit now at home in a state of readiness able to deploy anywhere another contingency might occur in the world.
- Second, the redeployment from Iraq will be lengthy. Moving 160,000 troops and 50,000 civilian contractors and closing bases are logistically challenging, especially in conflict. To ensure our troops’ safety, it will take at least a year, probably 15 to 24 months to complete the redeployment. This takes into consideration the closure or turnover of 65 Forward Operating Bases (FOBs), where on average it takes 100 days to close each and it will be important to balance how many to close at one time with calculations about surrounding strife. Kuwait’s receiving facilities to clean and package vehicles for customs and shipment back to the United States can handle only 2 to 2 ½ brigade combat teams (BCTs) at a time, and that there are currently 40 BCT-equivalents in Iraq.

Redeployment is also the most vulnerable of military operations, particularly in this case, with only a single road, leading from Iraq to Kuwait – “Road Tampa.” Such vulnerability is why, in 1993, after “Blackhawk Down” in Somalia it took six months to extract our 6,300 troops safely, but only after inserting another 19,000 to protect their redeployment.

Because the Army must either start a lengthy redeployment or risk unraveling, Congressman

Sestak believes that the catalysts for a bi-partisan agreement to end this war with a stable Iraq are in place and that America must work with Iran and Syria to meet this goal.

As Congressman Sestak noted, “Because a redeployment of troops will take a long time, we can have a bi-partisan approach to Iraq’s security. To do this, the Democratic leadership must turn from pure opposition to this war and an immediate withdrawal, and begin to help author a comprehensive regional security plan that accepts the necessity for a deliberate redeployment. In turn, the Republican leadership must accept that the U.S. government must also work diplomatically with Iran and Syria during this deliberate redeployment. While these two countries are currently involved destructively in this war, according to our intelligence community, these nations want stability in Iraq after our departure and, therefore, can play a constructive role.”

Congressman Sestak has consistently argued that a planned end to our military engagement in Iraq is necessary, and that such a “date certain” deadline will force Iraqi leaders to assume responsibility, providing Iran and Syria the incentive to prevent violence otherwise caused by U.S. departure. American troops can then either return home or deploy to regions (such as Afghanistan) where terrorists pose a threat to our security, while others remain at our existing bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and on aircraft carrier and amphibious groups, to ensure our interests in the Middle East region.

However, Congressman Sestak believes that a bi-partisan Congressional approach to convince the President to use diplomacy to bring about a stable accommodation in Iraq once our troops redeploy will undoubtedly require an initial redeployment deadline that is a “goal” instead of a “date certain.”

“Despite my continuing belief that a ‘date certain’ is the best leverage to change the behavior of the Iraqis and other regional nations, when faced with the otherwise assured consequences of a partisan stalemate on resolving the tragic misadventure in Iraq, this compromise is needed for America’s security,” said Congressman Sestak.

HR 3863 calls for the redeployment of United States Armed Forces serving in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom must begin within three months of the date of enactment. Within six months of the date of enactment, troop levels are to be at 15,000 below pre-surge level of 130,000 troops. It also establishes a goal that all United States Armed Forces serving in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom shall be deployed outside of Iraq, to locations within the Middle East or Southwest Asia regions or to other regions or nations, or returned to the United States.

The bill also places emphasis on diplomatic efforts. The United States should take a leadership role in diplomatic efforts and negotiations necessary for countries in the region, including Iran and Syria, to work together to ensure the long-term stability of Iraq, which is the best interests of such countries and the United States. It also calls for the United States should convene an international conference to bring together countries throughout the world to provide economic aid for rebuilding the infrastructure other reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Congressman Sestak believes these are essential steps to ensuring the long-term stability of Iraq and America’s national security.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for

31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.